

sending one specimen of *goodsoni* on loan to PRC at Tring. Dr. Per Sundberg and Dr. R. Prŷs-Jones read earlier drafts and made many useful and constructive comments.

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Noteworthy bird observations from Chile

by Steve N. G. Howell & Sophie Webb

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Like other South American countries, much remains to be learned about the avifauna of Chile, particularly with respect to local distribution of resident species and the status of non-breeding migrants. Hellmayr (1932) first summarised the general distribution of Chilean birds, and the excellent works by Goodall *et al.* (1946, 1951) and Johnson (1965, 1967, 1972) filled in more details, particularly concerning natural history. Araya & Millie (1986) incompletely summarise the distributional information of these earlier works. A number of recent authors have added observations on the status and distribution of Chilean birds, e.g. Howell (1975), Rasmussen & Lopez (1988), Marin *et al.* (1989), Sallaberry *et al.* (1992), and Vuilleumier *et al.* (1993).

We visited Chile for ten weeks in the austral spring and early summer, from 8 November to 11 December 1992 and 31 October to 6 December 1993, and Howell visited Chile for a further five weeks, 24 October to 26 November, and 18 December 1994. During these visits we travelled through virtually the entire country observing birds. We here report new information concerning 36 species, including data kindly contributed by R. S. Ridgely (RSR in following text).

NORTHERN GIANT PETREL *Macroneetes halli*

SNGH studied at least two Northern Giant Petrels 5 km S of Cape Horn, 18 December 1994. The brownish-red tip to the bill was seen clearly, in contrast to the greenish tip of numerous Southern Giant Petrels *M. giganteus* present for comparison; SNGH had seen hundreds of both species in the preceding two weeks, both at sea and on land.

The only prior records we are aware of from Chile are four beached carcasses "picked up on the Chilean coasts" (Johnson 1972). It seems probable that small numbers occur regularly in Chilean waters although specific records are lacking.

WESTLAND PETREL *Procellaria westlandica*

We observed one bird at sea approximately 15 km W of Valparaíso, Valparaíso province, 2 December 1993, and SNGH saw and photographed two in the same area, 8 November 1994. The birds on the latter date showed heavy moult of flight feathers (inner and middle primaries and tail), and one showed a pale, moult-induced bar on the upper wing coverts; this was in contrast to 75 White-chinned Petrels *P. aequinoctialis* seen on that date, only two of which had commenced wing moult, with one or two inner primaries dropped. In addition, SNGH saw three Westland Petrels in Argentine waters, east of the mouth of the Beagle Channel, on 3 December 1994: single birds at 55°04'S 66°02'W, 55°00'S 65°15'W, and 54°24'S 64°28'W. Two of the three showed obvious moult of middle to outer primaries; the third showed no signs of active moult. On all occasions, the similar White-chinned Petrel was also seen, and the relatively shorter and thicker, black-tipped bill of the Westland Petrel was observed clearly.

Apparently there have been only two prior records of this little-known petrel from Chile, and one from Argentina (Pearman 1994), although the increasing body of records points to the species being a regular non-breeding visitor to waters of southern Chile and adjacent Argentina. Presumably it has been overlooked because of its similarity to the common White-chinned Petrel.

GREAT SHEARWATER *Puffinus gravis*

On 18 December 1994 SNGH observed three Great Shearwaters at close range, in loose association with 10,000+ Sooty Shearwaters *P. griseus* 2–5 km E of Cape Horn. The only previous record we are aware of from Chilean waters is "small numbers" seen in the Straits of Magellan in January 1966 (Johnson 1972, Arraya & Millie 1986). Probably this shearwater, like the following species, is a regular visitor to Chile's southern waters.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

We watched at least 150 Manx Shearwaters milling at the eastern entrance to the Straits of Magellan, Punta Dungeness, Magallanes province, 28 November 1992, and SNGH saw two birds there on 24 November 1994 and one 5 km E of Cape Horn, 18 December 1994. Although there appear to be only two previous records from Chile

(Arraya & Millie 1986), it seems probable that this species is a regular visitor to Chilean waters during the austral summer.

LITTLE BLUE HERON *Egretta caerulea*

An adult at San Pedro de Atacama, El Loa province, 22 November 1993, and a moulting immature photographed at La Ligua estuary, Pitorca province, 29 November 1993, represent the southernmost records of this species. The Little Blue Heron is a vagrant in Chile, and previous records (the first in November 1971) are all from the vicinity of Arica, Arica province, in the extreme north (Johnson 1972, Arraya & Millie 1986, R. S. Ridgely pers. comm.), 370 km N of San Pedro and 1450 km N of La Ligua. The southernmost site where this species nests on the Pacific coast is the Mejia lagoons of Arequipa, Peru.

RUDDY-HEADED GOOSE *Chloephaga rubidiceps*

On northern Isla Grande, Tierra del Fuego province, we saw 10 birds (including 3 pairs) between Porvenir and Punta Percy on 26 November 1992, and 5 (including 2 pairs) between Punta Percy and Bahia Azul, 27 November 1992. On the mainland in southern Magallanes province we found a pair with 7 small downy young at Km 135.5 along Hwy 255, on 27–28 November 1992. In 1994, SNGH saw 2 pairs N of Porvenir on 1 November and at least 21 adults, including 8 pairs, along Highway 255 from Km post 111 to Punta Dungeness, 23–24 November. RSR saw 6 pairs (including one with 8 young) along Hwy 255 between San Gregorio and Tehuelche, 23 November 1989, and 3 pairs N of Porvenir, 24 November 1989. Concerning Isla Grande, Jehl & Rumboll (1976) noted “this species is clearly on the verge of extirpation”, although it appears to be persisting in small numbers. Even thirty years ago Johnson (1965) considered Ruddy-headed Geese very rare on the Chilean mainland and we know of no other recent nesting records there.

WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL *Anas bahamensis*

We observed 5 birds (apparently 2 pairs and 1 imm ♀) at La Ligua estuary, Pitorca province, 29 November 1993, in association with 600 Yellow-billed Pintails *A. georgica*. Considered an irregular and uncommon to rare visitor which may go unrecorded for a number of years (Johnson 1965).

WHITE-TAILED KITE *Elanus leucurus*

One on 6 December 1993 at Mar Brava, on the NW corner of Isla Chiloe, c. 20 km W of Ancud, Chiloe province, appears to be the first island record of this species whose southern range limit in Chile otherwise is the adjacent mainland province of Llanquihue (Johnson 1965, Araya & Millie 1986).

RUFIOUS-TAILED HAWK *Buteo ventralis*

We watched a juvenile circling over the Laguna de Maule road at Km post 60, Talca province, on 2 November 1993. The bird was flying over pasture land between forested hillsides, and resembled a light

morph juvenile Red-tailed Hawk *B. jamaicensis* from the western U.S., although the wing coverts, both below and above, appeared darker, without a noticeable band of pale mottling across the upperwing coverts. SNGH observed another juvenile hunting over open moorland adjacent to forest patches, 5 km W of Punta Arenas, Magallanes province, 25 November 1994. RSR noted a pair soaring near Antillanca, Parque Nacional Puyehue, Osorno province, 8 December 1986, and one bird there on 10 November 1987. Clark (1986) summarised information available on this poorly known species; we report these observations to supplement the meagre record.

CALIFORNIA QUAIL *Callipepla californica*

This non-native species was common and conspicuous at San Pedro de Atacama, El Loa province, 22–26 November 1993, and presumably is a fairly recent introduction there. The species is otherwise recorded only in central Chile, N to the Huasco Valley, 680 km to the S of San Pedro (Johnson 1965, Araya & Millie 1986).

BLACK CRAKE (RAIL) *Laterallus jamaicensis*

SNGH found the desiccated remains, including both wings in good condition, of a Black Crake on a levee through *Spartina* saltmarsh at La Ligua estuary, 29 October 1994. Potential avian predators nesting at this marsh included Cinereous Harrier *Circus cinereus* and Short-eared *Asio flammeus* and Burrowing *Athene noctua* owls.

Little information exists concerning the occurrence of this highly secretive bird in Chile. The few prior records are from the central provinces, with apparently none reported in the past 25 years. Despite looking for it “within and beyond its known range” Johnson (1965) found the species only in a stretch of marshy land on the outskirts of Santiago. As in California, it seems probable that this crake occurs in both salt and fresh water marshes, and future searches should take into account this possibility.

COMMON MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

On 26 November 1993 we saw two adults at Chacance, the confluence of the Loa and San Salvador rivers, Tocopilla province (c. 1200 m elevation). The slate-coloured upperparts of the birds suggested that the puna race *garmani*, rather than *pauxilla* of coastal Peru, was involved (see under Puna Snipe). SNGH also saw 20 adults and one immature at a reservoir in the Azapa Valley, Arica Province, 16 November 1994. In Chile this species is otherwise reported only from the puna zone (above 3500 m) of the high Andes, 200 km N of Chacance (Johnson 1965, Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990), and from the mouth of the Lluta river, Arica province, where one was seen in May 1970 (Johnson 1972).

HORNED COOT *Fulica cornuta*

This large coot is listed as a threatened species by ICBP (1992) who noted that a “large group” was seen in February 1989 at “Laguna Meñique (untraced but near Salar de Atacama)”. We visited Laguna

Meñique (elevation *c.* 4250 m; 23° 45'S, 67° 48'W), which lies in the bleak puna grassland 100 km SSE of San Pedro de Atacama, on 23 November 1993, and counted 180–200 Horned Coots and 70–80 nests, with 30–40 birds (but no nesting) on adjacent L. Miscanti. Most birds were still completing nests, some were incubating eggs, and at least two pairs had small chicks.

PERUVIAN THICK-KNEE *Burhinus superciliaris*

On 7 December 1992 we found a group of 21 birds, including a pair with two juveniles and a pair with an immature, in the Azapa Valley, Arica province. Although Araya & Millie (1986) reported only two Chilean records of this species (1851 and 1971), Sallaberry *et al.* (1992) found a pair of thick-knees nesting in the Azapa Valley in January 1990, and in February 1990 found groups up to ten individuals. Sallaberry (pers. comm.) subsequently found the species in the nearby Lluta Valley where we saw 3 birds on 6 December 1992 and SNGH found a pair with a nest and two eggs, 12 November 1994, and another pair with a half-grown chick, 16 November 1994. Apparently the species is a fairly common but overlooked, mainly nocturnal resident in these oasis valleys.

DIADEMED SANDPIPER-PLOVER *Phegornis mitchellii*

The biology of this enigmatic species is poorly known (cf. Johnson 1965, 1972, Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990). On 4 December 1993, at El Yeso, Santiago province, we saw one pair with two medium-large chicks and, at a nearby site, a second pair with a dependent(?) juvenile and two small chicks. On our initial approach the adults of this second pair ran off, leading the chicks to cover. Later, one adult occasionally pecked at one of the chicks and stood over it in a dominant manner. At the same time, this second pair associated closely with the juvenile, running to it in response to whistled calls it gave, and showed no aggression toward it. We saw no other adults in the vicinity and, although not certain, it appeared that the chicks and juvenile belonged to the same pair, suggesting that Diademed Sandpiper-plovers may, at least occasionally, be double-brooded. The close pair bonds of adults with chicks further suggest the species is monogynous.

The chicks and juvenile all had bright yellow-orange legs like those of the adult, not "greenish-yellow" as suggested by Hayman *et al.* (1986). Also, this species' vocabulary is more extensive than suggested by Hayman *et al.* (1986) or Fjeldså & Krabbe (1990): adults gave a clipped *pic* or *bic*, and *pic-pic* call while foraging and in flight; members of a pair greeted one another with a quiet, bickering chatter; a plaintive, slightly drawn-out *wheehu*, a less plaintive, fairly sharp *whee-u!*, and a surprisingly loud screamed whistle, *whEEHU!* seemed to be given as alarm calls.

WILLET *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*

We noted one at Las Cruces, San Antonio province, 6 December 1993. Willets seem to be genuinely rare along the central coast, whence there are two other reports prior to the Las Cruces bird (Araya & Millie

1986), although they are common in the extreme north of Chile (Johnson 1972, pers. obs., Sallaberry pers. comm.).

MARbled GODWIT *Limosa fedoa*

We observed and photographed a single bird at La Ligua estuary, 29 November 1993. Its large size and, especially, its very long bill suggested it was a female. There are only two prior Chilean records, one from Arica, the other from central Chile (Johnson 1965, Araya & Millie 1986). The latter report and our sighting are the southernmost reports of this species which is rare even in Peru and Ecuador (R. S. Ridgely pers. comm.).

PUNA SNIPE *Gallinago andina*

We saw one at El Tatio, El Loa province, on 25 November 1993, on a tributary of the Loa river (c. 4000 m elevation). In Chile this species is known elsewhere from the high Andes to the north (nearest site 250 km from El Tatio), and from the lower reaches of the Loa river, 150 km W of El Tatio. Our record fills a gap in the distribution of this species which, like *Gallinula chloropus* (see above), appears to occur in the limited areas of suitable habitat at both high and middle elevations in northern Chile.

PERUVIAN DOVE *Zenaida meloda*

We found this dove common at San Pedro de Atacama, 22–26 November 1993, and saw 6 at Toconao, an oasis 38 km SE of San Pedro, on 23 November 1993. We also saw 1 near Vallenar, in the Huasco Valley, Huasco province, on 28 November 1993. These records are all away from the range previously ascribed to the species: S to Quillagua (200 km NW of San Pedro) and disjunctly in the Copiapo Valley (135 km N of Vallenar). Peruvian Doves thus appear to be expanding their range in northern Chile.

Traditionally this form has been considered conspecific with the White-winged Dove *Z. asiatica* of North and Middle America. However, *meloda* is now generally recognized as a separate species, based on its strikingly distinct song, in combination with morphological characters (R. S. Ridgely pers. comm.).

BLACK-WINGED GROUND-DOVE *Metriopelia melanoptera*

We noted one at El Barquito (near sea level), on the south side of Chañaral, Chañaral province, on 27 November 1993. In Chile this is known only as a bird of the mountains (900–4800 m) where it engages in seasonal movements (Johnson 1965); it has been recorded accidentally to near sea level in Peru (Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990).

SPARKLING VIOLET-EAR *Colibri coruscans*

We found one singing in *Eucalyptus* trees at Putre, Parinacota province, 2–6 December 1992. There are three previous records from Chile, in July 1985 (Marín *et al.* 1985) and November 1988 and January 1989 (Sallaberry *et al.* 1992), all from the high northern Andes.

PERUVIAN SHEARTAIL *Thaumastura cora*

We observed 1 ♂ and 1 imm ♂, the latter singing, in the Azapa Valley, Arica province, 30 November–1 December 1992. Johnson (1972) reported the first record of this species for Chile, 2 ♂♂ seen in the Azapa Valley, November 1971, and Araya & Millie (1986) noted this still as the only record for Chile.

WRENLIKE RUSHBIRD *Phleocryptes melanops*

We recorded 10–15 birds, including some completing their nests, at Chacance on 26 November 1993. This population, described as a distinct subspecies (*loaensis*) by Philippi & Goodall (1946), was reported as still common at Chacance in December 1968 (Howell 1975). Despite continued use of Chacance as a popular recreation area (as noted by Howell 1975), combined with habitat modification (e.g., less extensive and lower rushes judging from comparison with a photo in Johnson 1965, p. 278), it is pleasing to report that both rushbirds and the endemic subspecies of Many-coloured Rush-tyrant *Tachuris rubrigastra loaensis* remain common. (We noted 20–25 of the latter, including juveniles.)

BAND-TAILED EARTHCREEPER *Eremobius phoenicurus*

On 24 November 1994 SNGH found two Band-tailed Earthcreepers at km post 10 (i.e. 10 km SE of Kimiri Aike) on the side road to the Punta Delgada ferry crossing of the Straits of Magellan, Magallanes province. The birds behaved as an agitated pair and were collecting and carrying food in their bills, presumably to feed young in a nest. The habitat was open, flat, coarse sandy ground with low tussock grass (to 15 cm) and a few scattered low bushes (to 1.5 m) atop which at least one bird sang on several occasions.

Vuilleumier *et al.* (1993) discussed the one prior Chilean record of this distinctive earthcreeper, a bird collected in November 1988 only a few km from the 1994 site. It seems probable that the species has been overlooked as a local breeding bird in Chile as it is common in adjacent Argentina.

AUSTRAL CANASTERO *Asthenes anthoides*

This species is considered threatened by ICBP (1992). In November 1992 we found it fairly common but local on northern Isla Grande and on the adjacent mainland: 3, including a pair, at Km 105.5 N of Porvenir, 27 November; 1 singing and 4–5 heard near Pta. Delgada, 27 November; 8–10 at Pta. Dungeness, 27–28 November; 3–4 heard along highways 255 and 9 between Pta. Delgada and the junction for Seno Otway, 28 November; 2 seen and 3–4 heard on the road to Rio Verde (30–50 km N of Punta Arenas), 29 November. In November 1994 SNGH found Austral Canasteros sufficiently common in these same areas that he did not record specific observations (“fairly common, recorded in suitable habitat, of which there is plenty”), and we suggest that this species’ status of “threatened” be reconsidered. The birds were in rolling to level grassy plains with scattered to fairly concentrated areas of low scrubby bushes and patches of bunch grass.

They foraged on the ground and low in bushes, and sang from atop bushes and on fences. RSR also noted small numbers of Austral Canasteros in these same areas, 1986–1989.

SHARP-BILLED (LESSER) CANASTERO *Asthenes pyrrholeuca*

SNGH found two birds singing from atop bushes at Km 8 on the Punta Dungeness road, Magallanes province, 24 November 1994. The birds were in an area of fairly dense bushes (to 2.5 m high) about 200 × 300 m in area, a habitat rare in this part of Chile, and too dense for the Austral Canastero (which was present in nearby, more open habitats). SNGH is very familiar with the Sharp-billed Canastero and its song from central Chile, where it occurs south to Aysen province (Johnson 1967, Ridgely & Tudor 1994, Howell pers. obs.), some 500 km to the north of this observation.

GREY-BELLIED SHRIKE-TYRANT *Agriornis microptera*

This species appeared to be fairly common in and around San Pedro de Atacama, 22–26 November 1993, where we saw a pair with 1–2 juveniles, another apparent pair, and two single birds. First found in Chile in the high Andes of Tarapaca province (Johnson 1965), and subsequently reported from other localities, including oases near San Pedro, by Marin *et al.* (1989). The records of Marin *et al.* (1989) all were during July–August, and our observations support their surmise that this species is resident in the vicinity of San Pedro.

WHITE-TAILED SHRIKE-TYRANT *A. andicola*

We observed one on a rocky slope overlooking a bog, 2 km SE of Parinacota, Parinacota province (c. 4350 m), on 4 December 1992. We suspect the bird was a juvenile since it was in extremely fresh plumage and showed dusky streaking on the chest as do juveniles of the other three Chilean species of shrike-tyrants (pers. obs.). ICBP (1992) consider this little-known bird a threatened species and list the few recent records from Chile.

BANK SWALLOW (SAND MARTIN) *Riparia riparia*

We noted one Bank Swallow with other swallows in the Azapa Valley, 7 December 1992, 6–7 at San Pedro de Atacama, 22 November 1993, and 7–8 at Chacance, 26 November 1993. This species is generally considered rare in Chile where it was first recorded in 1968 (Howell 1975). There have been a few subsequent reports from north and central Chile (Johnson 1972, Ridgely & Tudor 1989), and a recent specimen from Magallanes (Vuilleumier *et al.* 1993).

CLIFF SWALLOW *Hirundo pyrrhonota*

We saw single Cliff Swallows in the Lluta Valley on 1 and 6 December 1992, in the Azapa Valley on 7 December 1992, and at Chacance, 26 November 1993, and 30–40 with 40–50 Barn Swallows *H. rustica* at San Pedro de Atacama, 22 November 1993. SNGH also saw four in the Lluta Valley, 15 November 1994. Araya & Millie (1986) reported only two Chilean records, but we suspect that both Cliff

Swallow and Bank Swallow are regular but often overlooked migrants in northern Chile.

GIANT CONEBILL *Oreomanes fraseri*

We observed and photographed one feeding in a grove of *Polylepis* trees, 14 km by road SW of Putre, at *c.* 3300 m elevation, on 1 December 1992. The only previous report from Chile is that of three birds seen at nearby Zapahuira in December 1991 (Sallaberry *et al.* 1992).

GOLDEN-BILLED SALTATOR *Saltator aurantiirostris*

We saw one at Putre on 2 December 1992, and SNGH saw at least five birds there, including one collecting food and one singing, 13–15 November 1994. Although Araya & Millie (1986) noted only one Chilean record, Sallaberry *et al.* (1992) reported sightings of this species from Putre in the months of November and February, between 1988 and 1991. Apparently the Golden-billed Saltator is a local breeding resident in extreme northern Chile.

SLENDER-BILLED FINCH *Xenospingus concolor*

We found two adults (apparently a pair), one of them singing, at Chacance on 26 November 1993. This is a range extension of 28 km south along the Loa river from the previous southernmost occurrence at Quillagua (Johnson 1965). The recent planting of ornamental shade trees at Chacance may have helped this species reach the site, since it was not recorded there in 1968 by Howell (1975).

BLACK-THROATED FLOWERPIERCER *Diglossa brunneiventris*

We observed up to 12 birds per day in and around Putre during 2–6 December 1992, and SNGH saw at least six birds there, 13 November 1994. Most birds were singing strongly and we noted possible courtship chasing by apparent pairs, suggesting the species was nesting. The only previous records from Chile are also from Putre, in February 1948 (Johnson 1965), February 1989 (Sallaberry *et al.* 1992), and December 1989 (RSR) but, like Golden-billed Saltator, the Black-throated Flowerpiercer appears to be a local breeding resident in extreme northern Chile.

SHINY COWBIRD *Molothrus bonariensis*

We noted up to five birds in both the Azapa and Lluta valleys, 30 November–1 December 1992, and SNGH saw small numbers there in November 1994. Marin *et al.* (1989), in documenting the spread of this species in Chile, had records north only to Quebrada de Camarones (65 km S of Azapa) where cowbirds were first noted in 1986. The species appears to be continuing to expand its range in Chile.

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IN BRIEF

FIRST RECORD OF KEMP'S LONGBILL *MACROSPHENUS KEMPI* IN CAMEROON

Kemp's Longbill *Macrosphenus kemp* is known to occur locally in forest from Sierra Leone, southeastern Guinea and Liberia to the Niger River in southeastern Nigeria (Hall & Moreau 1970, Keith in prep.). On 30 May 1992, one was seen in the northern part of Korup National Park, Southwest Province, Cameroon (5°16'N, 9°11'E). It was distinguished from the other two *Macrosphenus* found in this region, *flavicans* and *concolor*, by its entirely dark brown upperparts, grey throat, breast and centre of belly, and prominent reddish-chestnut flanks which are characteristic of the subspecies *flammeus* of